

REPORT OF THE INTERIM COMMITTEE TO STUDY
LICENSING OF SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

January 3, 1986

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THE INTERIM COMMITTEE TO STUDY LICENSING
OF SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

On December 3, 1985, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Bob F. Griffin, appointed an interim committee to study the licensing of school bus drivers. Representatives serving on the interim committee were: Louis Ford (Chairman), Bill Clay, Neil Molloy, Ed Ottinger, and William Whitehall.

An organizational meeting was held December 9, 1985. Two public hearings were scheduled and subsequently held. The first was held December 18, 1985 at the Wainwright Building, 111 North Seventh, Saint Louis, Missouri. The second was held the following day in the J.C.Penney Building on the University of Missouri-Saint Louis Campus, 8001 Natural Bridge Road, Saint Louis.

WITNESSES' PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE

Witness groups and individuals providing oral testimony included: the Department of Public Safety, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Highway Patrol, the Saint Louis Metropolitan Police Department, the Saint Louis County Special School District, the Saint Louis Board of Education, public and private school administrators, school bus contractors, school bus driver instructors, taxi-cab companies, school bus drivers, and concerned citizens.

The witnesses' proposals for change included the following:

1. A comprehensive license classification system, including a special class for school bus drivers;
2. A minimum amount of school bus driver training;
3. Age limits of 21 and 70;
4. A driving test taken in the appropriate size vehicle to be driven;
5. An annual physical examination, including tests for alcohol and drug use;
6. A criminal and driving record check from state-wide records;
7. A law requiring school bus drivers to use mechanical and electrical signaling devices while loading and unloading students;
8. A requirement that each school district develop a discipline policy relating to conduct while riding a school bus.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee found that because current legal requirements for operating a school bus are inadequate, there exists both the need and public support for stronger licensing procedures for school bus drivers in the state.

The committee therefore recommends the following:

1. Develop a comprehensive system to govern licensing drivers of various class sizes of motor vehicles. (A bill establishing the comprehensive system is currently being drafted).
2. A bill addressing the specific standards applicable to school bus drivers. (See appendix). These standards are to be included in the comprehensive bill or added as an amendment.
3. A bill requiring school bus operators to use mechanical and electrical signaling devices while loading and unloading students upon a street or highway.
4. A bill requiring school districts to develop a discipline policy specifically related to students' conduct while riding on a school bus.

APPENDIX

To repeal sections 302.070, and 302.051, RSMo 1978, and to enact in lieu thereof four new sections for the purpose of establishing standards for issuance of permits for operation of school buses.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI, AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Sections 302.070, and 302.051, RSMo 1978, are repealed and four new sections enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as sections 302.015, 302.051, 302.070, and 302.270, to read as follows:

302.015. Operator's and chauffeur's licenses and school bus drivers' permits shall be issued pursuant to this chapter.

302.051. Any person holding a valid operator's license shall not be required to procure a chauffeur's license for the operation for official use of any motor vehicle owned by the United States, the state of Missouri, or by any municipality or political subdivision of this state. [except that any person operating a school bus, carrying more than ten pupils, shall be required to procure a chauffeur's license.]

302.070. No person who is under the age of twenty-one years shall drive any motor vehicle while in use as a [school bus or] public or common carrier of persons or property until he has been licensed as a chauffeur, except that drivers of trucks of less than one ton manufacturer's rated capacity may be licensed as a chauffeur if at least eighteen years of age.

302.270. 1. No person shall drive, nor shall any contractor or public, parochial or private school permit any person to drive, any school bus within the state unless such driver has qualified for a school bus driver's permit under this section and the pertinent rules and regulations of the named departments. A school bus driver's permit shall be issued to each applicant who meets the following qualifications:

(1) The applicant has a valid state operator's license or chauffeur's license issued under this chapter or has an operator's license or chauffeur's license valid in any other state;

(2) The applicant shall be at least twenty-one years of age and not over seventy years of age;

(3) The applicant shall have passed a thorough physical examination, as prescribed by the department of revenue, including tests for hearing, vision, alcohol or drug abuse, and communicable diseases. The applicant must also be found not to suffer from any

physical or mental disability or disease which would serve to prevent the applicant from exercising reasonable and ordinary control over a school bus while operating it on the highways. Such examinations shall be a prerequisite to renewal of a permit issued under this section.

(4) The applicant shall have completed a course, administered in accordance with regulations developed by the department of revenue, of at least eight hours duration of special instruction in school bus driving;

(5) The applicant shall have passed a school bus driving test administered by the department of revenue. The test shall be completed in the appropriate class of vehicle to be driven. For purposes of this section, school buses will be classified as:

Class A - those capable of transporting twenty-four or more passengers; and

Class B - those capable of transporting fewer than twenty-four passengers;

(6) After investigation by the department of revenue, the applicant shall prove to have a satisfactory driving and criminal record in accordance with standards set by the department. Such proof shall also be a prerequisite to renewal of a permit under this section;

(7) The applicant shall have passed a written test on the operation of a school bus, the test to be administered by the department of revenue. The written test must be successfully completed for renewal of a permit unless the applicant has completed an in-service training program approved by the department;

(8) The department of revenue shall suspend or revoke a school bus driver's permit whenever the department is required to suspend or revoke the holder's operator's or chauffeur's license, or whenever notified of a criminal conviction which will establish an unsatisfactory criminal record according to standards set by the department.

2. Except as modified by this section, application for and renewal of the permit for school bus drivers shall be as required by this chapter for operator's and chauffeur's licenses; except that, a school bus driver's permit shall be renewed annually, at a time set by department of revenue regulation.